

# Tanzania unbans DDT

Government seeks to crush malaria, which is the number one killer in Tanzania, claiming the lives of 50 per cent of children under five as well as pregnant women

By The Citizen Reporter

long-standing ban on DDT in a bid to bolster the fight against malaria.

The insecticide was banned more than a decade ago amid a worldwide campaign by environmental activists

who pointed to its harmful effects on the environment.

Announcing the lifting of the ban, the Minister for Health and Social Welfare, Prof David Mwakyusa, told reporters yesterday that the aim was to strengthen efforts to fight malaria.

Malaria is the number one killer in Tanzania, claiming the lives of 50 per

cent of children under five as well as pregnant women. Some 33 per cent of all outpatient cases at Tanzania's hospitals and clinics are malaria-related.

At least 300 million acute cases of malaria occur worldwide each year, resulting in more than one million deaths annually. More than 80 per cent

of these are estimated to occur in sub-Saharan Africa, mostly among children under five years old. Recent estimates of the global burden of malaria are even higher, with one study estimating that 515 million cases of clinical malaria occurred in 2002.

Overall, malaria accounts for 10 per cent of Africa's disease burden,

and it is estimated that malaria cost the continent more than \$12 billion annually. Although Africa is hardest hit, it is estimated that more than one third of clinical malaria cases occur in Asia and 3 per cent in the Americas. The estimated cost to effectively

...continued on page 2

## Tanzania lifts ban on DDT

From page 1

control malaria in the 82 countries with the highest burden is about \$3.2 billion annually.

Prof Mwakyusa was briefing the press on a meeting of heads of state held in Abuja, Nigeria, last week, where Tanzania was represented by the Vice President, Dr Ali Mohammed Shein.

The leaders discussed strategies to fight malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/Aids. He also announced that a new anti-malaria treatment would be introduced towards the end of this year as the malaria-causing organism had developed resistance to current medicines.

DDT, or dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane, was among 12 blacklisted persistent organic pollutants under the 2001 Stockholm Convention, which was ratified locally in February 2004 and became effective in May the same year.

The use of DDT increased worldwide after World War II, primarily because of its effectiveness against the mosquito that spreads malaria and lice that carry typhus.

However, problems related to



A customer negotiates price for mosquito net with a hawker in Dar es Salaam in file picture. The government intends to use DDT in a bid to bolster the fight against malaria.

extensive use of DDT began to appear in the late 1940s. Many species of insects developed resistance to DDT, and DDT was also discovered to have a high toxicity toward fish and humans in the long run.

In a televised interview recently the director of National Malaria Control Programme said plans are under way to launch the use of a new

anti-malaria cocktail which has been tried in Rufiji, Coast region.

Recently a new malaria drug, Co-artemate, was launched in Dar es Salaam by Prof Zuri Premji of Muhimbili University College of Health Sciences and Dr Francis Jansen of the World Health Organisation (WHO).

Tanzania is among few tropical countries that have made significantly

strides in the fight against malaria because of using mosquito nets.

Tanzania is among Africa countries receiving assistance from the Global Fund against Malaria, TB and HIV/Aids.

A total of \$1.2 billion has been donated through the Fund to 15 countries South of Sahara in five years. In the current financial year a total of \$115 million has been dedicated to Tanzania by the Global Fund. Most recent efforts against malaria have involved intensive public awareness campaigns on the use treated mosquito nets. The minister implored Tanzania to commit themselves to preservation of the environment as a way of fighting diseases.

The meeting declared that countries worldwide should make sure that at least 15 per cent of their budgets is committed to health services. Only five countries worldwide have attained that goal, though many states have made pledges to up their health spending.

Last year health spending in Tanzania reached 14 per cent of the national budget.

The mark will go down this year, owing to drought and food shortage.